

December 11, 2018



Heart of Illinois
United Way

509 W. High Street
Peoria, Illinois 61606-1994

hoiunitedway.org

(309) 674-5181 phone
(309) 674-1056 fax

Abby J. Clark
Board Chair

Timothy D. Neuhauser
Past Chair

Paul and Colleen DiGiallonardo
Vice Chairs-Resource
Development

Erik Christian
Vice Chair-Community
Investment

Shelli Dankoff McClellan
Vice Chair-Marketing/
Communications

Mark Miskell
Treasurer

Sharon A. Desoulin-Kherat
Secretary

Jennifer L. Zammuto
President

Darrin A. Autry
Matt Bartolo
Patricia J. Bash
Jeffrey R. Bogdan
Robert Brandfass
Kevin C. Burns
Seth A. Davis
Molly Drenckpohl
Clinton J. Drury
Brent Eichelberger
Paul E. Flynn
Gail R. Garrison
Robert C. Gates
Robert J. Hills
Katie McCord Jenkins
Bill Kwon
Jeanette Murray
Brian A. Ray
Thomas D. Schlink
Sally P. Snyder
Mark A. Spenny
John Sutherland
Patrick Ulrich
Tana L. Utley

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for requesting public comments regarding the Suicide Hotline Improvement Act.

We appreciate that Congress passed the bill early in 2018 which directs the FCC, SAMHSA, and the VA to assess and provide recommendations about the feasibility of designating a 3-digit number to the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), and to generally assess and provide recommendations about the effectiveness of the hotline. Currently, the NSPL is advocating strongly for designating 611 for the hotline.

The Heart of Illinois United Way manages our local 2-1-1, including marketing efforts, and working with our implementing partner, Advanced Medical Transport. Our 2-1-1 has been widely used and is making a real difference in the Central Illinois community today, by getting citizens in need access to the housing, food, diapers, formula, help with bill payment, workforce readiness, and other needs.

There are concerns that assigning a new 3-digit number, like 611, to the suicide hotline will make seeking help confusing, and won't address some of the critical gaps in infrastructure and investment that exist right now. United Way nationally has agreed that any portion of an investment made to improve access to suicide prevention services should include investment in the 2-1-1 network, given the high volume of mental health and substance abuse calls, and the number of calls collectively answered that may not be immediately a mental health crisis but are from folks at risk of experiencing a crisis.

Thank you for considering incorporating the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline into existing 2-1-1 call centers. This will get those in need to the potentially life-saving information they need most quickly. And it saves money, by not duplicating messaging, advertising and communications costs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Zammuto".

Jennifer Zammuto, President

